



Northwest Chicago Historical Society

Your Neighborhood Historical Society

Newsletter January 2014

Number XIX

LaBagh Woods Homes • M. J. Suerth Funeral Home
Memories of Old Wicker Park

In this issue, two areas on the Northwest Side are featured: Edison Park, at the far north-western corner of the city, and Wicker Park, just northwest of downtown. Early photos of the M. J. Suerth Funeral Home with its eponymous founder are featured in the Edison Park photostory. Written in 1944, *Memories of Old Wicker Park* details one man's childhood memories of life in Wicker Park around the turn of the twentieth century.

This issue's "Letters to the Editor" section has increased in size dramatically from previous issues. This is due to the recent deluge of mail we have received regarding the history of the Northwest Side. As these questions may be of interest to our readers, we are publishing some of the more interesting questions. Additionally, other individuals have been contacting us with historical information that they would like to share, including photos and stories. We welcome all of them and hope that you will enjoy reading these contributions.

The NWCHS has noticed an increased interest in our local history throughout the Northwest Side. An effort in Portage Park to propose a National Register Historic Bungalow district is one sign of this historic enthusiasm. Additionally, this past Fall, a rewrite of the famous radio broadcast of Orson Well's *War of Worlds* (set in Jefferson Park and Chicago in 1938) was presented by the Gift Theatre and was a huge local hit. The well-attended 75th anniversary of Sears at 6 corners last October was another key local event that stirred up historic interest. Of course, our more recent "Standing Room Only" meetings of the Northwest Chicago Historical Society have also been alerting us to this accelerated curiosity.

A passion for local history is contagious, and we are glad to do our small part in spreading the excitement. – *Frank Suerth*

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Mission Statement:

As the Northwest Chicago Historical Society, our mission is to educate others about the history of the Northwest neighborhoods of Chicago. We will accomplish this through discussion at meetings, public tours and events, and dissemination of historical documents and photos through publications. Additionally, we desire to collaborate with others in the community to continue to maintain and preserve the history of our collective neighborhoods. By linking the past with the present and the future, we will provide awareness and create appreciation for our place in Chicago's and Illinois' history.

The Northwest Chicago Historical Society

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Keep track of what is happening at the Northwest Chicago Historical Society

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NW Chicago Historical Society

P. O. Box 30067
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e-mail: nwchicagohistory@sbcglobal.net

Membership:

\$15.00 per calendar year
\$10.00 for 65 years old and over
Website: nwchicagohistory.org

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Letters

Letters may have been edited for clarity and space

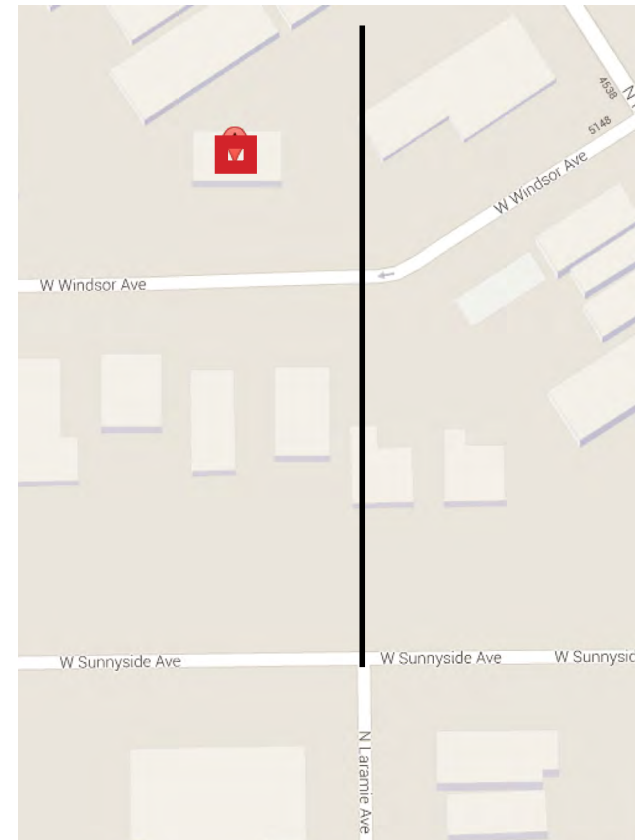
Do you have some information and possible pics of our house. The house is 5222 W Windsor Ave and faces Milwaukee. The house is over 150 years old and we were told that the original owners owned all the land up to Milwaukee and that is why the front door faces that way.

If you have any information, we would love to find out more. Thanks so much!

Eric Craig - Jefferson Park

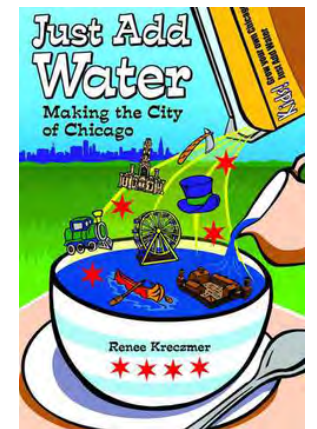
Your house does not squarely face Milwaukee like other houses and buildings do. But your house does squarely face Laramie if Laramie came that far north. See map below. Maybe your house was built on Laramie or what the builder thought would be Laramie. I have not seen on any old maps with Laramie running that far north but I feel very confident your house was built for a Laramie address.

We do not have any old photos of your house but we do have a few pictures of the long gone houses that were just north of you on Milwaukee. - NWCHS



Thank You Renee Kreczmer!

Chicago Public School teacher, Renee Kreczmer, came to one of our meetings and talked about interesting ways to pass our rich history to the next generation. If you missed the meeting you can still purchase her book, Just Add Water: Making the City of Chicago.



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Letters

I am researching images for an upcoming program on WTTW Channel 11 to be hosted by Geoffrey Baer called "Chicago Time Machine," which peels back layers of history of various sites in the Chicago area. One of the sites is the Labagh Forest Preserve in NW Chicago where 500 prefabricated homes from Kingsford Heights, Indiana, were shipped in 1945 to serve as emergency housing for war veterans. These homes were demolished in 1955.

I am writing to ask whether the Historical Society may have images of these prefab veterans' homes, called "Sauganash Homes," or if not, if you might have any suggestions as to other repositories where I should look. I thought I'd also try the Henry Green Photograph Collection at Sulzer Library.

Thanks in advance for any information that you could provide!

Jean Guarino – Oak Park, Illinois

Richard Davis of Saint John, Indiana sent us these images of life at the LaBagh Woods community. Temporary CHA Homes for Veterans 1945 to 1956. - NWCHS

This home was located at 4422 W. Berwyn (now LaBagh Woods). John Raymond Davis calling on a friend, Bill Zeeh on the first day of school. Photo taken 9/4/1951

Galvin's Public House

5901 W. Lawrence Avenue

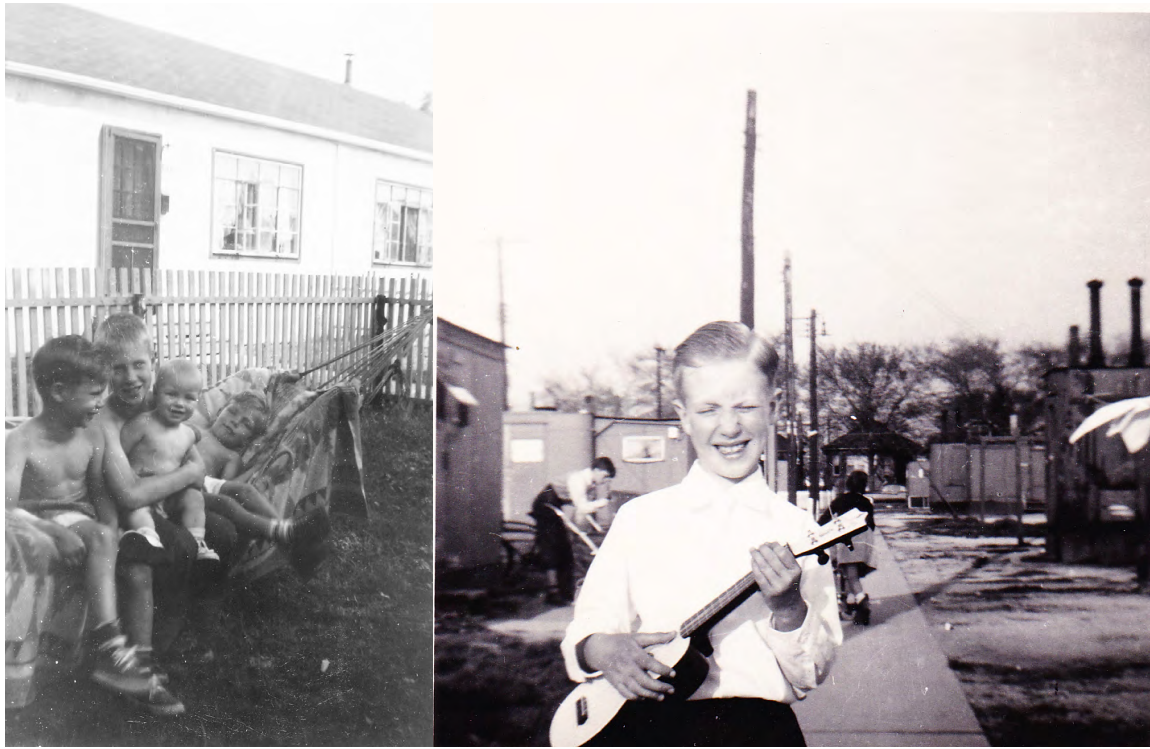
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The hammock is attached to a large tree at their home, 4424 W. Berwyn, John Raymond Davis and Richard Davis with two other boys. Photo on the right is from another long gone neighborhood north of LaBagh Woods at 5913 N. Tripp. Richard Davis with a ukulele.



Richard Davis is in the pool with his mother Eileen Davis at their home at 5913 N. Tripp. Boy behind fence is unknown. By the looks of these buildings it also must have been a temporary housing neighborhood.



Pictured above is John Raymond Davis (unknown girl). At this earlier time, they were living in a trailer near Peterson Avenue (5911 north). Another lost neighborhood most likely near the Tripp address.
All Photos Courtesy of Richard Davis

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As Announced

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Novena To Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Tuesday 7:00pm
in the Upper Church

1st Friday Adoration
Upper Church 8:00am-5:00pm
1st Saturday Devotion
Lower Church 10:00am-3:30pm

Holy Hour Devotion
First Sunday of month after the 11:15am Mass

Our warmest welcome to all who celebrate with us, whether visitors, neighbors, long-time residents, or newly arrived in the Neighborhood.

Our parish family extends an invitation to all to join us as we celebrate the Sunday Eucharistic at the Lord's Table.

Our Lady of Victory offers a diverse group of ministries and organizations to fill the varied interests of our 2,500 individual members.

Our Lady of Victory School is open to all regardless of religious affiliation. Our emphasis is, of course, in the Roman Catholic Tradition. This award winning school has room for 500 students from Pre-K through 8th Grade.

Our Lady of Victory also supports a vital Religious Education Center for all ages. From three and four year-olds to seniors, we have a Religious Education for all.

Leisure time organizations are the heartbeat of Our Lady of Victory, from Scouting for boys and girls of all ages, sport activities, to our Mothers' Club, Parish Men's Club, Teen Club and including our very active Music Ministry with Chamber Choirs, Adult, Teen and special Choirs.

We welcome you to join with us in our celebration of God's Word.

Reverend Robert Fedek, *Pastor*

Letters

What was the 1st movie shown at the Gateway Theater on opening day in 1930?

Michael Patrick Thornton - Jefferson Park
Artistic director & co-founder of the Gift Theatre

Billed as the most acoustically perfect theater in the whole county, the Gateway Theater formally opened its doors on Friday June 27, 1930. This theater was designed for the new "Talkie Movies," therefore the Gateway was one of Publix Greater Talkie Theaters. The Inaugural Program consisted of the following; Henri A. Keates – At the Mighty Grande Organ, World News Reel in sound, a comedy short "She Who Gets Slapped", an Our Gang comedy short, "The First Seven Years" with the main movie, Zane Grey's "The Light of Western Stars" starring Richard Arlen & Mary Brian. The Gateway did formally open on June 27, 1930 but the night before had a special preview (one performance only) at 9:15 PM - NWCHS



Mary Brian & Richard Arlen from a promotional photo for the movie *The Light of Western Stars*.

Thank you Michael Patrick Thornton & The Gift Theatre for asking the Northwest Chicago Historical Society to help out with the 75th Anniversary of the radio broadcast of Orson Wells' *War of the Worlds*.

Find out what is happening at the Gift thegifttheatre.org

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HISTORY THRIVES AT THE ARCHIVES. AND YOURS CAN TOO!

by Kenny Mihlfried

Senior prom, that awful dress, a first kiss. Day after Christmas, the green bicycle, out for a spin in the snow. Grandpa's garden, late September, picking tomatoes at twilight. Sister's birthday, pin the tail on the donkey, a surprise guest. Summer vacation, Indiana Dunes, a terrible storm with hail. Raking leaves, trash bag takes off in the breeze, dad runs after it. Railroad crossing, atop familiar shoulders, you wave to the passing train.

What will become of these things? Will they last longer than our memories can hold them in our heads? Longer than the paper we write them down on?

Some of us are lucky enough to have captured such images on film--otherwise known as home movies. We sleep soundly, knowing that they are boxed up in the back of the attic, or biding their time in the basement.

But films, like our memories, can fade. They become fragile and brittle. Eventually, they can disintegrate beyond repair. They can be lost forever.

The need to preserve and properly care for our home movies becomes more and more pressing over time. Even if you've managed to acquire a digital or videotape transfer of your film, it's important to keep the source film intact. If the correct measures are taken, film will outlast any other format. Furthermore, as my dad always reminds me: "Film is special because it was there in the moment, when the moment actually happened!"

It's imperative that we preserve these films--first, because they are irreplaceable visual records of our family and friends, but even more so because they are time capsules. They are windows that offer a unique vision of a particular time and place in history, and they are significant well beyond the sentimental qualities we attach to them. Home movies have been and continue to be invaluable to researchers, educators, and historians alike. As the years go by, the need to preserve such films and to make them accessible becomes increasingly prevalent.

If we do nothing, our films will eventually be lost to the ravages of time. We must save our films from certain ruin, and we must take action now! The Northwest Chicago Historical Society has found a way to make this happen.

Recently, we discovered Chicago Film Archives, a non-profit organization dedicated to "identifying, collecting, preserving and providing access to films that represent the Midwest." CFA was established in 2003 in order to preserve and catalog over 5000 films that were donated by the Chicago Public Library. They have been collecting all kinds of films ever since. "CFA is particularly interested in home movies and other amateur work... These films provide a valuable historical record of everyday life in the Midwest that needs to be cared for and handed down to future generations."

We couldn't agree more! That said, the **Northwest Chicago Historical Society** hereby announces:

FILM DRIVE 2014!

It starts now. As a tentative deadline, we would like to receive submissions by the end of October, 2014.

So here's how it works: You donate your home movies to us--8mm, Super 8mm, and 16mm film. Pick-up can be arranged if necessary. At the end of the Film Drive, the NWCHS donates the movies to CFA, where they will live happily ever after! Each film in CFA's vault will be "inspected, repaired, placed in archival containers, and catalogued so as to guarantee its survival and accessibility." It's important to know that once your films are turned over to CFA, they become part of CFA's permanent collection--in other words, you can't ask for them back. In my humble opinion, this is a small price to pay for the assurance that your beloved home movies will be cared for and professionally archived long after you will have left the planet! You don't need to pay anything to donate your films, although CFA welcomes monetary donations. Digital copies of your films can be provided for a fee.

In many ways, this is quite an experiment for the NWCHS. We don't know what kind of response to expect. But we believe that, with your help, we will succeed in gathering a Collection of films that will ultimately serve to represent a cross-section of history on the Northwest Side. Each one of your submissions will be another step towards achieving that Collection.

For more information about the Film Drive, or how to submit films, please contact Kenny Mihlfried: kmihlfried@hotmail.com / 773-574-6868. For more information about Chicago Film Archives, please visit: www.chicagofilmarchives.org

Please spread the word to family and friends. Chances are, someone you know has a box of celluloid in the cellar. We look forward to hearing from you. Roll film!

M. J. Suerth Funeral Home
Edison Park's Oldest Existing Business

By Frank Suerth

Remember when funeral homes were family owned and operated? Well, the M. J. Suerth Funeral Home is still a family run enterprise in Edison Park operated by Dennis and Donald Krawzak since 1990. The brothers have worked at the Suerth Funeral Home since 1974. The M. J. Suerth Funeral Home has been on this Northwest Highway site in Edison Park since 1927, making it the oldest business in this community.

M. J. Suerth, the man who started the business, was born Maurice Joseph Suerth in Chicago on February 6, 1902. His parents, Louisa DuPlain of French ancestry and Joseph Suerth of German ancestry, were also born in Chicago. As a young man Maurice helped his father rewire houses replacing gas lighting with the new electrical fixtures.

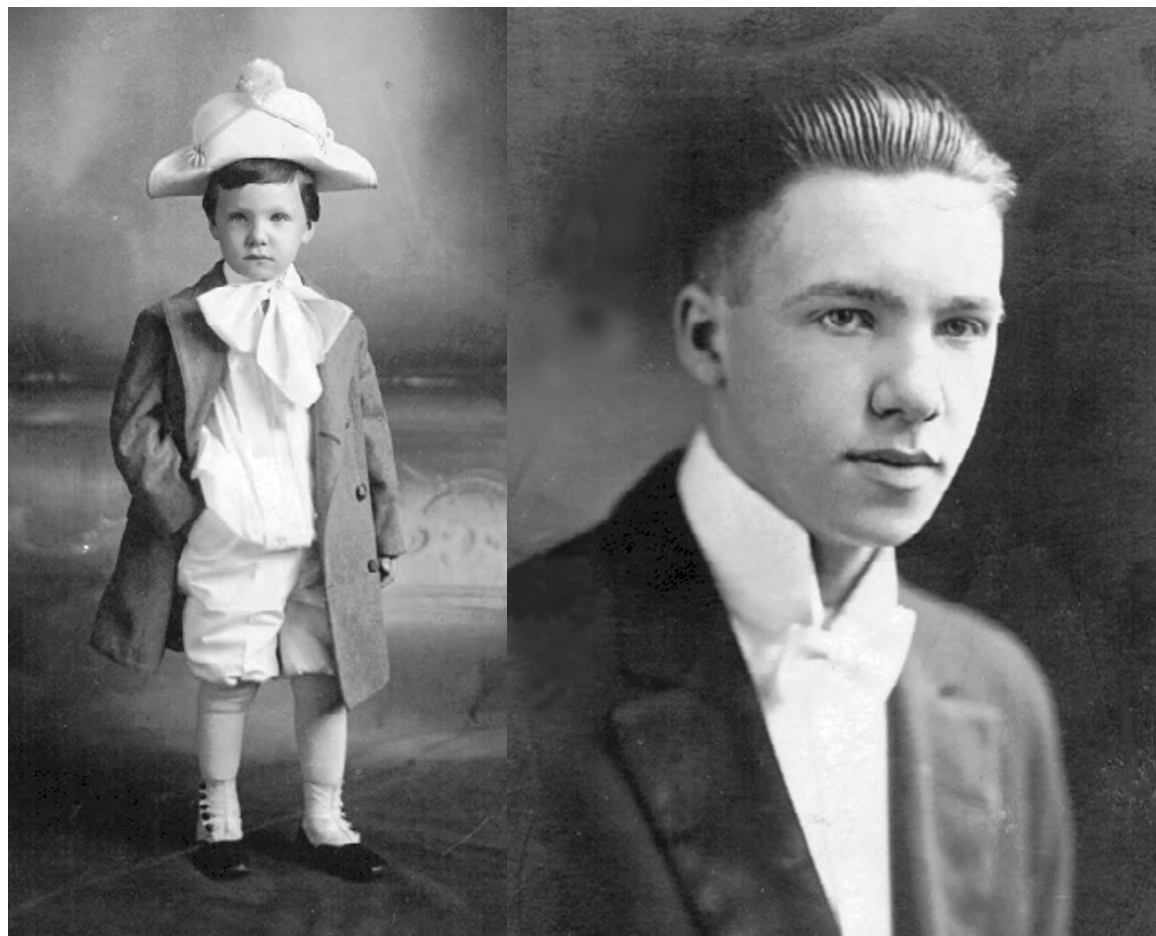


Photo on the left, M. J. Suerth age 4 dressed up as Napoleon. M. J. Suerth age 21, photo on the right.

Photos Courtesy of Sandi Zidel

A funeral home has been established at 6754 Northwest Highway, affording all necessary requirements to properly care for our many friends.

It will be our pleasure to have your suggestions to make our service fully satisfy your every requirement.

A visit will be very welcome.

M. J. SUERTH

November 26th, 1927

Formal announcement of the opening of the Edison Park business.

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By about 1920, Joseph A. Suerth saw how successful the undertaking business was by just looking at his wife's relative William Nelles and his brother Jake Suerth's businesses as undertakers. So, under the objections of his son Maurice, Joseph enrolled him into Worsham College of Mortuary Science.

Maurice, who was mostly call Bud by everyone who knew him well, opened his business in 1923, in a storefront at 4407 Elston Avenue near Montrose. Business was difficult at first; he was opened for nine months before his first customer. The Nelles-Duplains were not happy about his decision to go into this line of work and neither was his uncle Jake, but Bud eventually prospered anyway.

Bud's brother Robert Suerth opened up a funeral home out of a large house at 5754 N. Central Ave., near Bryn Mawr Ave. He ran several different businesses out of the house and garage. The funeral home was only open for a short time.

This 1927 photo has Joseph A. Suerth on the left with his son Bud on the right. Bud is shown with a mustache in the photo. He grew the mustache to make himself look older because he felt people thought he was too young. The photo was taken in front of the original building on Northwest Highway. Joseph also received a funeral directors license after Bud started his business.

Photo Courtesy of Ruth Suerth

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Early Advertising, circa 1927. M. J. Suerth, Superior Ambulance Service ink blotter. Funeral Home with Northwest Highway address and Chapel with Elston address.

Photo Courtesy of Donald Krawzak



M. J. Suerth Funeral Home on Northwest Highway, the way is looked in 1936. It is now a combination of a few connected buldings. *Photo Courtesy of Donald Krawzak*

By 1927, M. J. Suerth Funeral Home was moved to 6754 Northwest Hwy. Bud transformed M. J. Suerth Funeral Home into " a funeral home in a garden setting." He retired in 1967, selling the business. After selling his business, Bud still lived in an apartment at the Northwest Highway address helping out into his 90's. M. J. Suerth who had no children died on July 8, 1997 and is buried in St. Joseph Cemetery in River Grove, Illinois.



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1926 Studebaker on left - M. J. Suerth 19.

Photos Courtesy of M. J. Suerth

Memories of Old Wicker Park

By Waldo G. Hansen – November 1944

My boy Jerry, age 13 and I get off the Metropolitan “L” at Damen, the old Roby Street Station, turned to the left at the street level and walked half a block north and stood on the intersection of Milwaukee Avenue, North Avenue and Damen (Roby) Street and there were the six corners that Dad Hansen used to show us when we lived in Chicago.

“This is where the Old Neighborhood started Jerry. Dad used to show us the slot between the cable car tracks on Milwaukee Avenue and we would hear the cable running along down below.” “Lets turn back south and cross the street and follow the park to Evergreen Avenue.”

The park looked the same as it did when we played there some forty-six years ago. I believe the last time I had seen it was about 1916, just prior to World War I. For the moment I wondered whether I could pick out the “52 Evergreen”(1) Brainard House but it was easy to recognize when we were leaving the pointed end of the triangular Wicker Park.

Jerry and I walked around the back yard but the barn where we believed the “Weasel”, a monster of some kind according to Lillie Brainard, was no longer there so we couldn’t check up on Lillie or the “Weasel”. The Pason yard looked natural and some willow trees were growing there in their proper place.

Past the Pason house with its arches on the porch to the bend in the street, where we passed the “Delicasey” where we bought eggs in the old days in brown paper cones. On the opposite side of the street I pointed out the home of the boy who took off his heavy wool underwear and got pneumonia. He was a fat boy and the kids teased him, which accounted for his rash act and tradition had it that he turned blue before he died so the symptoms were correct. Jerry said that kids don’t have to put on thick heavy underwear now days so there is no danger of taking it off so that’s why their health is better. Might be.

It seemed that distances were a lot shorter than when I was a six year olds and traveled this street. And then we were in front of “111 Evergreen” (2). “This where we lived the 1st part of our Chicago days” I told Jerry and our brother Charlie was born here and I saw a horse car from the window and the day we moved I saw Mrs. Brainard taking the “For Rent” sign out of the window at “52 Evergreen Avenue” and I was four years old and so couldn’t read the sign at the time and that is about the first recollection I have of Chicago.

We crossed Damen (Roby) Street and there was “Monkey” Learche’s Church. Dad said he “Monkey” the preacher carried bibles around in his pockets, which made them stick out so. The flat building and store on the southwest corner, did not look right so must have been built in later days.

There was Wicker Park School but Engal’s Store was not to be seen. The basement window ledges seemed too low but I showed Jerry the one on which I climbed and stood directly below the teacher, when she opened the window and chased us kids from in front of the school and she didn’t get my name because I flattened myself against the window. Hansey Moler had been kept after school and we got the bright idea that we should “rug it in” by hollering “Oh Hansey, Yih! Hoo!” which the teacher didn’t seem to appreciate.

Through the front “Teacher’s door” Jerry and I passed and up the stairs and into the hall of the front section. The halls were the same and in fine state of repair. Almost new paint and varnish. The ceilings were not nearly so high it seemed as I expected them to be. A turn to the left and up a short grade and we were in the “old” section at the 4th grade room. The seats seemed so small. I expected to see the rings in the ceiling of the hall where we used to hook the climbing poles but I guess the kids don’t climb any more as they were not to be seen. I showed Jerry the corner where Blaine hit his head and cut it open as he swung on the pole next to the wall.

(1) The address 52 Evergreen was changed 1909 and would now be about 1913 W. Evergreen.

(2) The address 111 Evergreen was changed in 1909 to 1970 W. Evergreen.

Over to the 1st room there were no seats as it is now the kindergarten. I pointed out the window under which the teacher Miss Strong seated me on a small chair facing a large chair and gave me a bowl of wooden pegs about 1” long and said to “make some pictures”. That was my 1st school task and I still am making pictures (mechanical drawings) most every day. Then I got sick in that 1st grade and after some weeks went back and my chair was gone and I went home broken hearted but was glad to be assigned a seat the next day after a morale talk from my mother.

Room 2 had been changed to a dinning room for the school cafeteria and room 3 was now the kitchen and serving room. In the corner of room 2, to the right of the door, I showed Jerry where Miss Tumbler put me on the “Little Red Chair” because I talked to a girl who asked me for my eraser. Jerry looked at me as if he thought I should have had better judgment than to let a girl get me in a jam but it seems that honor was involved, so I sat in the chair facing the wall. Anyway I “took the rap”.

Above the blackboard, I pointed out to Jerry, where Miss Tumbler and Mr. Rifalski hung wonderful crossed rifles and had the boards decorated with trees and fields in colored chalk. This gave the room a soft pleasing atmosphere so that we believed Room 2 was the best room in Wicker Park School. Now there were no crossed rifles and the blackboards were painted a tan color appropriate for a dining room. What would Miss Tumbler and Mr. Rifalski think if they were to see it now?

The stairs were not as wide or as long as they used to be it seemed but the assembly room on the third floor was just the same as it was when I dressed as a brownie and sang about “A lady would wear a high hat at a play. A brownie would never do that. The man just behind her unkind things would say. A brownie would never do that”. And then dressed as a sailor “I’m a merry sailor lad. Yeh! Ho!”

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Out of the door on the boys' side, we cut across to the southwest corner of Hoyne Avenue. Near the corner, I showed Jerry where I was sliding on some ice in the gutter and fell, striking my forehead on some frozen ground on the terrace, which had been muddy foot prints the day before. I got up and walked down North Hoyne Avenue towards home, when Tilton Clark's sister exclaimed "Oh! Look at Waldo's head!" I put my mitten to my forehead and it came away with a round red spot about the size of a silver dollar. Then I lit out for home on the run and my mother put cort plaster over the cut and I stayed home from school and that afternoon a four shelled book case arrived and she said Blaine could have it (he read so many books) and that's how I got the scar on my forehead.

Jerry and I came to the Barel house and I told him about some fresh kids, that had two billy goats and they arrested our brother Charlie and put him in the patrol wagon drawn by the goats and I ran scared to death and told my mother, but Charlie came right in behind me much to my relief. Some time later, we saw where the Bartel house had been on fire and looked through the cellar window and there were the goats roasted. We concluded, that they had been eating matches, which caused the trouble. One day one of the Bartel kids pushed Blaine off the front curb right under the feet of some big horses on a coal wagon going by and Blaine lit flat on his back with the horses head right over him and the horses stopped short with both front feet together and legs straight the horse leaning back almost sitting on his haunches. Blaine jumped out from under the horses nose in a flash and wasn't I relieved. We concluded that the horse had more sense than the Bartel kid had.

Ahead of us was the corner of our old block and then Jerry and I passed the house where Phillip Paul Manard lived and Charlie and I played soldier. A few doors further and we were at 572 North Hoyne Avenue, our last home in Chicago (3). We climbed the high stairs up to the front porch and I pointed out to Jerry the mark, about 1 1/2" wide in the sash of the Gruda flat, where the burglars tried to get in but their "jimmy" would not open it so they went below to the north side where they opened a window at grade level. We were eating supper in the kitchen and heard them leaving when they were frightened by the return of the Grudas. We thought they were after our sled on the back porch. The mark was just as if it had been made yesterday instead of 45 years ago.

We went around the south side of the building to the back yard where Gruda's rat terrier dog killed all the rats and left their hides all around the back yard and expired from the rich diet. The house in the rear a combination stable and quarters for the groom was just the same, with its big doors for the Gruda carriage, which was under a white cover but never out because they had no horse or groom either. We did not check up on the carriage however. The stairs of the back porch leading up to our flat were closed in now but otherwise the porch was the same. On the way to the front again, we passed the side entrance stairs to the lower Gruda flat and I told Jerry how Lillie Paulson grabbed me right there, when I was on my skates and was six years old and plump and she hugged me so tight that my back hurt and tears came to my eyes and Mrs. Gruda, her aunt, found out and scolded (poor) Lillie and I wasn't bothered by girls hugging me for years and years because I guess I wasn't plump any more. Lillie must have been about 18 and could play the piano swell.

(3) The address 572 Hoyne was changed in 1909 to 1243 N. Hoyne.

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Down the street, about two houses, I pointed out Tilton Clark's house (4). He was our friend and had a new pair of boots and liked to wade in the water in the empty lot next door (A flat building is there now). His mother called "Tilton, you must not play in the water any more, come right in and get your feet dry". Tilton answered "Yes Mother", and kept right on playing in the water. Our mother would not let us play in the water in the spring, in the empty lots it was too cold. The next day Tilton couldn't play with us as he had a cold and it got worse and then he got the pneumonia. His brothers chased the Bartel kids and their wagon away, because it made so much noise and Tilton was worse. Then he died. Our mother took the three of us and went over to Tilton's house and Tilton looked so quiet and nice, with his soldier cap on and there were candles burning, which lighted up his face and he seemed to be saying "Yes Mother, I will come right away". Our mother sat down and talked with Tilton's mother and she cried and our mother cried and said she felt as if was one of her own boys. A black hearse and hacks drove up the next day and Blaine was asked to be a bearer but it was cold so my mother kept us home, as the cemetery was a long ways and horses took a long time. Afterwards they said Mickey Welch, the leader of our gang, said a prayer for Tilton at the grave. That wasn't Mickey's type but it seemed nice of him to do it. For weeks I laid awake nights wondering, at my six years of age, how if it were possible, to bring Tilton back to life again and when I stood at the railing on our back porch and watched the clouds piled up like pillows in the sky, I thought of Tilton up there amongst them like the fliers of today. That was a mighty tough outcome for Tilton and his boots and our mother never had any trouble getting us to come in when she called.

Across the street was the cottage where Rudie Smith lived. We called him "Rab" for rabbi, not that he was a Jew but he talked so fast. When we first moved to "572" Rudie stood on the curb and called to us "Come adaw!" and we found out later that he meant "Come across". He had a three-wheel bike and was fine about letting us ride it. Blaine got a two-wheeled bike later and that reduced the demand.

(4) The Clarke house was located at 1237 N. Hoyne.

The Linager house directly across the street from 572 looked the same and Jerry has often heard the story about Luther Linager the boy who wouldn't be "it". The gang was playing "Baby in the Hole" with a soft rubber ball. The idea was that each player had a hole the size of a cup in the ground and one player rolled the ball and it rolled into the hole assigned to Luther. He had to recover the ball and throw it at any of the other fast disappearing players. If he hit one of them, than that player was it. But Luther's didn't hit anyone and so he was "It". He was then expected to stand about 15 feet away from the foul line, bent over with his hands on his knees at right angles to the foul line. The last player who was "it" had the privilege of socking the soft rubber ball at Luther's rear view as a target. If he got hit he wasn't "It" any more and if he didn't get hit, that was his good luck and in either case he rolled the ball (the baby) into the hole the next time.

The game had gone along for some time and we had most of us been "It", when Luther found himself "It" and refused to follow the rules of the game. Mickey Welch ruled that the gang was "mad at" Luther. For six months or more, no member of the gang spoke to Luther or associated with him in any way. To have broken the rule would have meant that the offender would meet the same fate as Luther. Then one morning there was excitement on Hoyne Avenue. A crowd including most of the gang and Mickey Welch surrounded Luther who was driving a team of billy goats and a new harness and wagon. We all took turns and drove the wagon and were passengers. The gang wasn't "mad at" Luther any more and our mother wondered why we had acquired that strange odor. I always maintained that if Dr. Linager had realized how goats lifted the ban on Luther he would have made the investment months sooner. It took him a long time to cure Luther from being anti social.

Mickey got mad at Blaine one time and had the gang after him because Blaine tore a corner about 1" long off a Carter Harrison poster. We were republicans and Mickey was a democrat. They chased Blaine for a few days but Dad understood kids better than Dr. Linager and squared things up with Mickey and the gang were not "after" Blaine any more. Boy, wasn't I relieved.

Jerry and I were in front of Mickey Welch's house by now and I showed Jerry where we gathered and had the meetings of the "Rusty Button Gang". Mickey presided and made his own rules as situations presented themselves.

The lot next to Mickey's house (5), where the cops chased us because we were playing ball, had a building on it now. Then we came to Hansey Moler's house (6). It was a red brick house and stood right close to the walk without a front yard. It didn't look clean like when Hansey live there and Jerry and I opened the front door and peeked in and there seem to be some kind of wholesale supply business there now. We walked in and there were two Jews putting labels on boxes and we told them that I lived down the street about 1900 and knew some boys who lived there and their father ran Moler Brother's Store on Milwaukee Avenue. One of them said that's forty-four years ago. The other younger man said "Were you here in 1916 when they had election returns on the front of this building on a screen?" I said "No that was fifteen years after we left for Beloit Wisconsin". They looked at me as if they thought I should have long whiskers on, so Jerry and I inspected some more of the rooms where Hansey, Earl and Art Moler played with us.


- (5) Mickey Welch's house was at 1220 N. Hoyne.
- (6) The Moler (Moeller) house was at 1208 N. Hoyne.

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We were almost to Division Street by this time and across the street, where there was a store building now, I explained to Jerry that there had been an empty lot with a high walk on the Division street side. The lot was low and the walk wooden with space under it. One Sunday morning, the three of us brothers were returning from Sunday School and were decorated with McKinley and Roosevelt (Teddy) buttons all over the fronts of our coats. I had one about 3 inches in diameter on my lapel. Just as we passed the high walk we were held up gangster style by three big lads, who came out from under the walk and peeled off buttons like brushing off flies. We hollered and I put my hand over my big button and hung on and it was all over in a minute and they ran up an alley, but I still had my big button but that was all.

Over the tracks on Division Street, to the southwest corner was a drug store, where we used to wait hours for clerks to put up medicine for our mother. Jerry and I went in and bought some candy bars and told the clerk that I used to trade there about 1900 and he said, "I have been here thirty years and I thought I was an old timer". I mentioned several names of people on Hoyne Avenue but they did not register, as the neighborhood had changed, most of them having moved to Lagan Square or, as we did, to the country, which is any where out side of Chicago to persons who live there.

The Division Street trolley car was about two blocks down the street, so we took one last look at Hoyne Avenue and climbed aboard and were eating candy bars as we passed the car barns and looked for the "prairie" back of them, that stretched for blocks, but there was no prairie, just buildings. At Western Avenue we transferred north and sat amongst the workmen going home from the shops. I asked Jerry if he "would like to live in the big city?" and he said "Give me the country and the lakes, where I can throw out my chest and get a breath of fresh air". That made me wonder whether it meant as much to him as to his father but then I recalled that Dad Hansen had left Chicago for that very reason.

We looked out of the streetcar window as we were crossing Milwaukee Avenue and the people were running to catch the Milwaukee Avenue car home. A workman was sitting on the seat in front of us sleeping, with his head on the shoulder of the man next, another workman. After many blocks his friend roused him and he stood up and looked dazed and said "I don't know where I is". They all laughed and piled off at the next corner.

This essay is written in 1944 by Waldo G. Hansen. He wrote the essay after visiting the Wicker Park area with his son, Jerry. Waldo was born in 1892 in Wisconsin, made a career for himself in the Wisconsin National Guard, lived in Waupaca, Wisconsin and died in 1962.

Thank you Karen Clark-Hansen for sending this interesting piece of Chicago history that was written by her Great Uncle.

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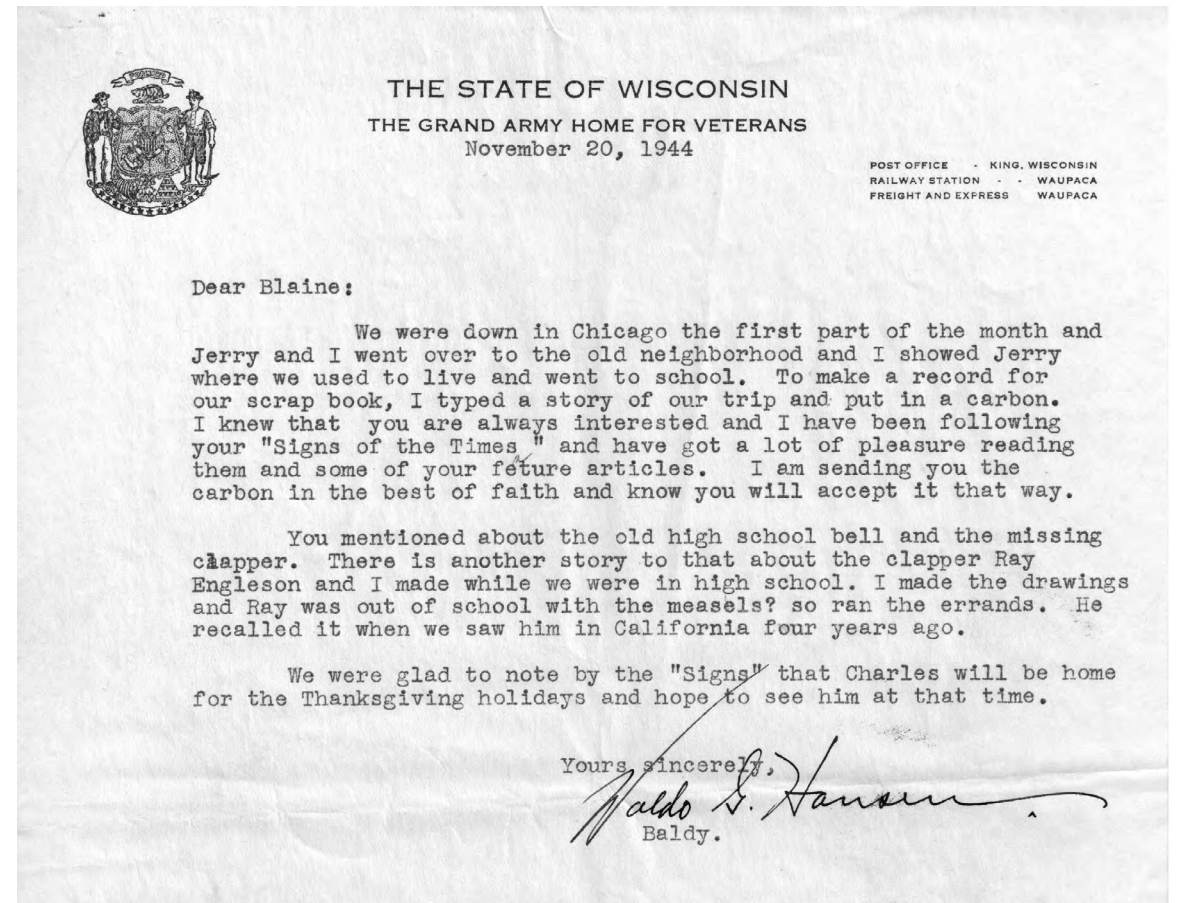
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Thank you Lara Solonickne for sharing your expertise on Sears kit homes with a PowerPoint presentation at one of the Northwest Chicago Historical Society meetings. View Lara blog at: www.sears-homes.com or on your Kindle at Amazon with a Kindle Blog subscription.

We also would like to thank, Lydia Home at 4839 Irving Park Rd for letting us use their historic location for our meeting.

Letter written by Waldo Hansen to his brother Blaine telling him about his return visit to their old neighborhood in Wicker Park.

Letter Courtesy of Karen Clark-Hansen

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